



MARVEL

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021

DUGGAN
CASELLI
BLEE





The Brood deserve no quarter. They take everything from you. We have the power to end their threat, and we should use it.

-- SCOTT SUMMERS,
AT AN EARLY MEETING OF THE
KRAKOAN WAR CAPTAINS



[x-men_[0.00] ...]
[x-men_[0.21] ...]
[x-men_alpha.]

Knowhere is...
nowhere.

Lost in another
universe after
falling into a black
hole, two big brains
went looking for it.

I feel like this machine is a true
shared creation, Monet. A
collaboration...a child.

Nice to
bump brains with
you, Forge.

It was genius of you
to target the second
largest gravity
source in our
solar system.

You'd
have
thought
of it if I
didn't.

Let's go
home...

...or die
trying.

At this moment, the
X-Men were scattered,
and depending on your
perspective, Jean Grey
was even farther from
home than Forge...

...in the astral plane! The demon known only as--

NIGHTMARE!

--was seeking revenge for the Omega mutant telepath laying her hands on him in a previous adventure.

He'd learned *little* in the interim.

UGHN!

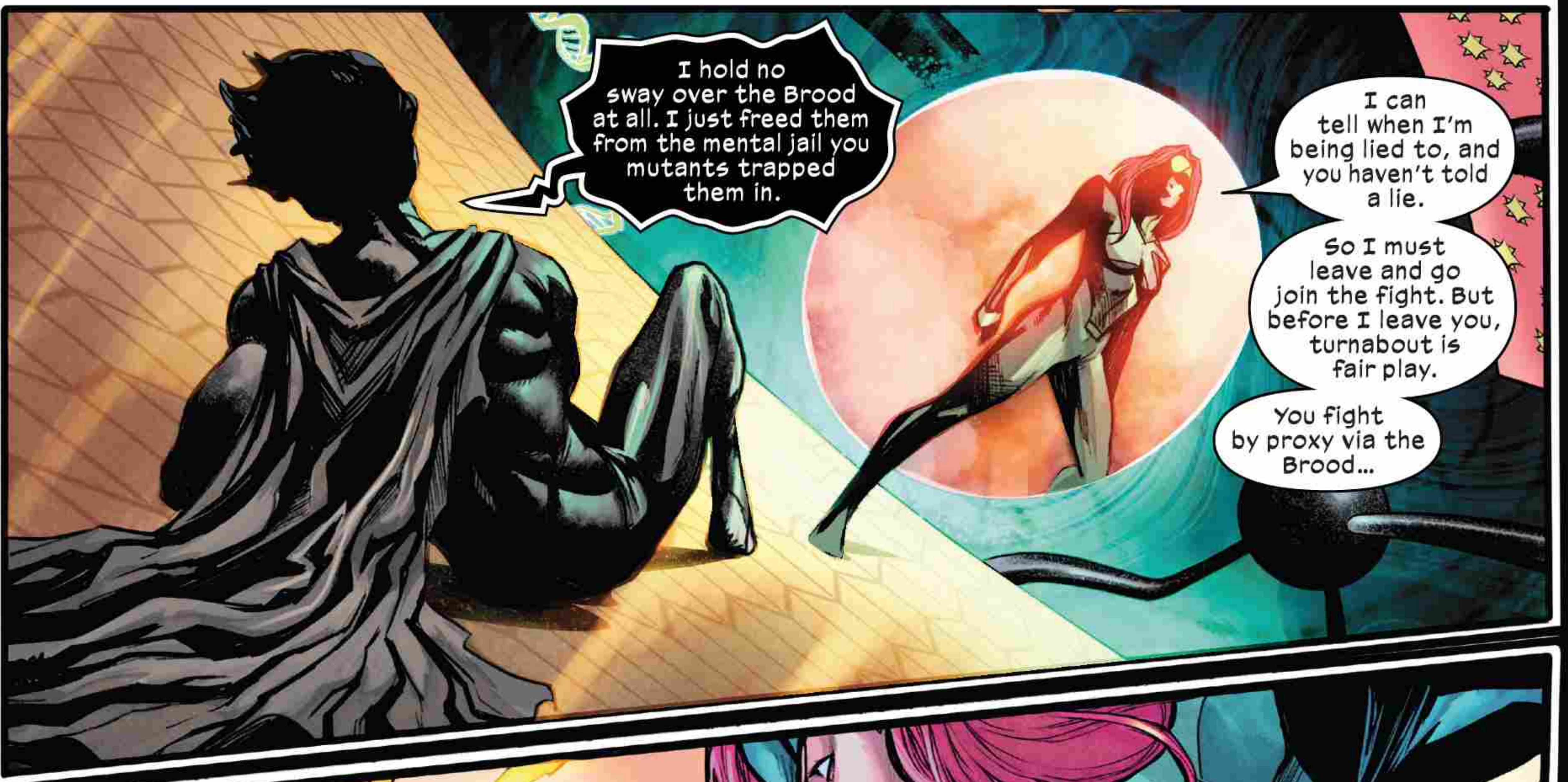
Release your grip on the Brood, murderer.

ARGH!

When Nightmare severed most of the Brood from the hive mind, they reverted to form and rallied around new matriarchs.

WALOOF!

At present, they were blitzing through the galaxy planet by planet. Nightmare's plan was to give the Brood access to Krakoa's gates by subjugating one of Jean's former students.



I hold no sway over the Brood at all. I just freed them from the mental jail you mutants trapped them in.

I can tell when I'm being lied to, and you haven't told a lie.

So I must leave and go join the fight. But before I leave you, turnabout is fair play.

You fight by proxy via the Brood...



...so I'm waking all the souls you've preyed on and letting them know that their nightmare is on the menu.



NO! DAMN YOU, WITCH!

BACK! BACK-- ALL OF YOU! YOU DARE NOT LAY YOUR HANDS ON ME!



You can't kill me, woman!

I am beyond death--you only anger me more!



Your world is about to burn! And when you are brought to your knees--I'll be waiting!



I try never to kill, because I can do so without effort, but if you attack me again, I'll snap every atom in your body apart.

You'll only exist in books on magic.



HA HA
HA!

You speak
of breaking bonds,
but I promise you--
what is one will be two
by the end of your day--
and then you'll still have
the fall of your kind
to witness.

HA HA
HA!



Jean! You were
tough to locate in
here. What happened
to the horseman with
no chill?

Jean, please--
I can save the Brood
that Nightmare turned
against me. I'm scared
for them.

There's no
need. The X-Men
will save as many
as we can. Even
the Brood.

Magik,
take us to the
X-Men.



On it.

X-MEN

WHAT IS THE PRICE OF MERCY?

Somehow Broo's control over the Brood hive mind has been broken and waves of the parasitic monsters have swept across the galaxy. Cyclops' own father, Corsair, fell victim to one such attack -- though luckily, the X-Men were able to arrive in time to save him and rescue many other aliens in the process.

Jean and Magik split off from the team to grab Brood and find out why the Brood are attacking -- only to find themselves face-to-face with Nightmare, who has a score to settle with Jean.

Elsewhere, Forge and Penance sent themselves through the Krakoa gate to Knowhere, the space station built in the decaying head of a Celestial that was thought to be lost through a black hole. Determined to bring Knowhere back, they've rigged their own black hole to help send them back...or at least, they hope it will.

*To see where the Brood are threatening another corner of the Marvel Universe, check out ***CAPTAIN MARVEL #46!***



[JEAN GREY]



[SYNCH]



[ICEMAN]



[FIRESTAR]



[PENANCE]



[CYCLOPS]



[MAGIK]



[FORGE]



[TALON]



[BR00]



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The X-Men were in deep space with a cargo hold full of alien refugees.

What's the closest safe port for the folks down in the hold?

Arakko wouldn't be safe.

Maybe Shi'ar space?

I wish I'd pushed harder for the Atlantic archipelago of Krakoa to become a safe haven for refugees.

Another @### decision by the Quiet Council.



Ev. There's something wrong. Do you smell it?

They're pretty stressed out, but... otherwise...



...they're fine?

Oh no.

→GASP!←



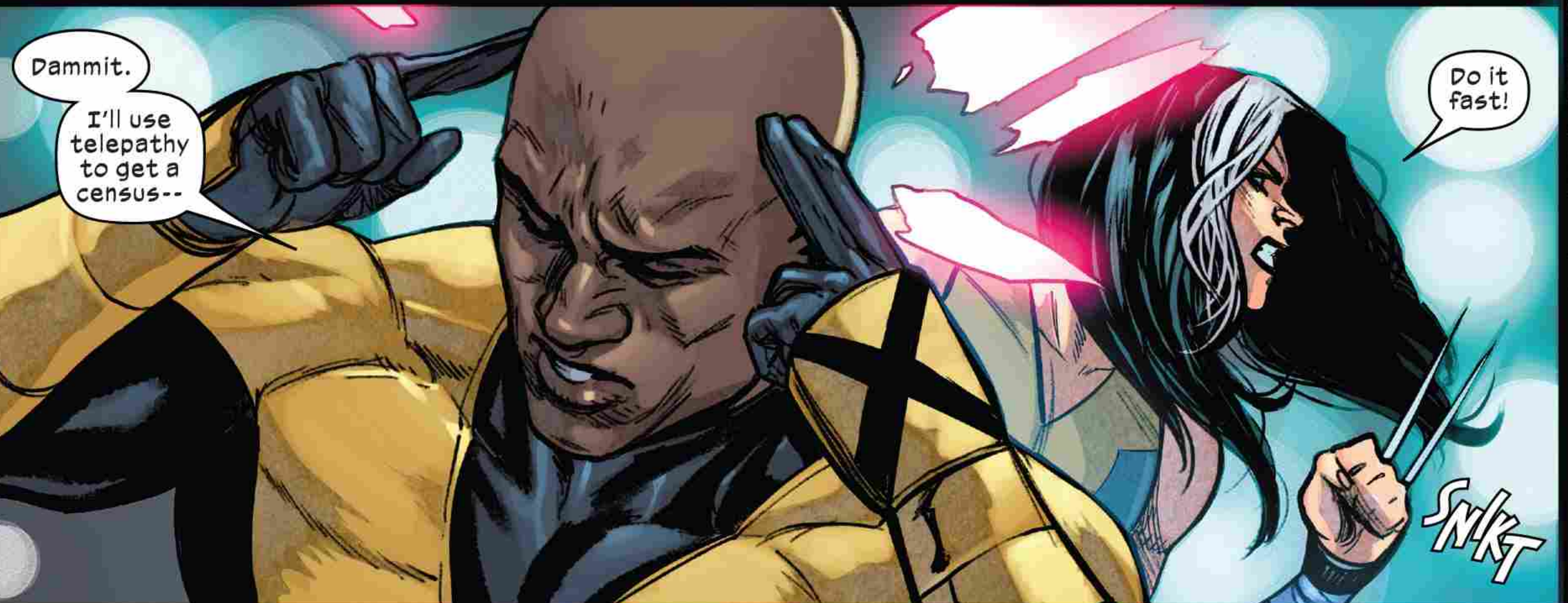


S-stay
back!

The Brood eat
from the inside
out and wear
the shapes of
their victims
for as long as
they can.



Eventually,
the sheep's
clothes
slough off.

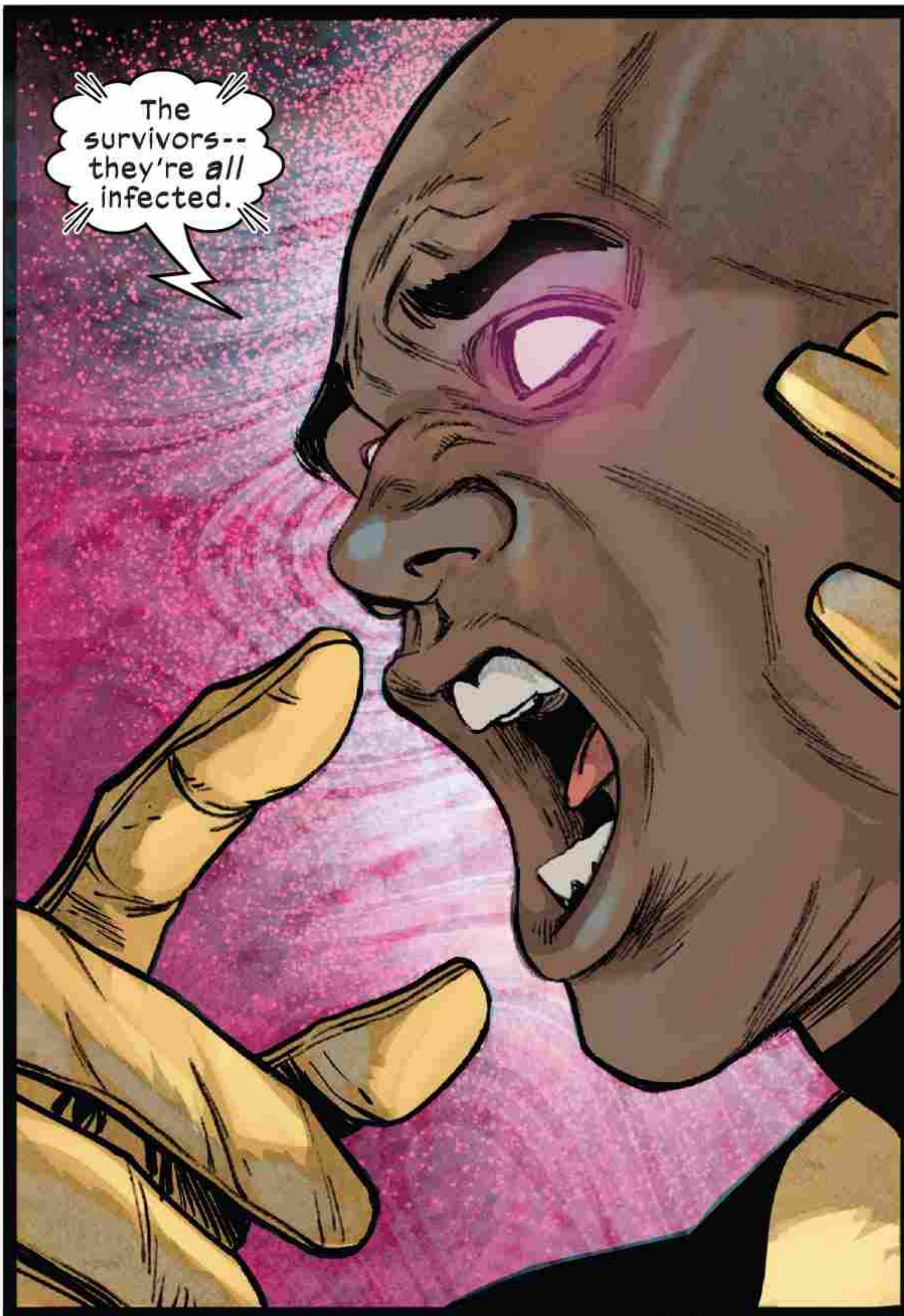


Dammit.

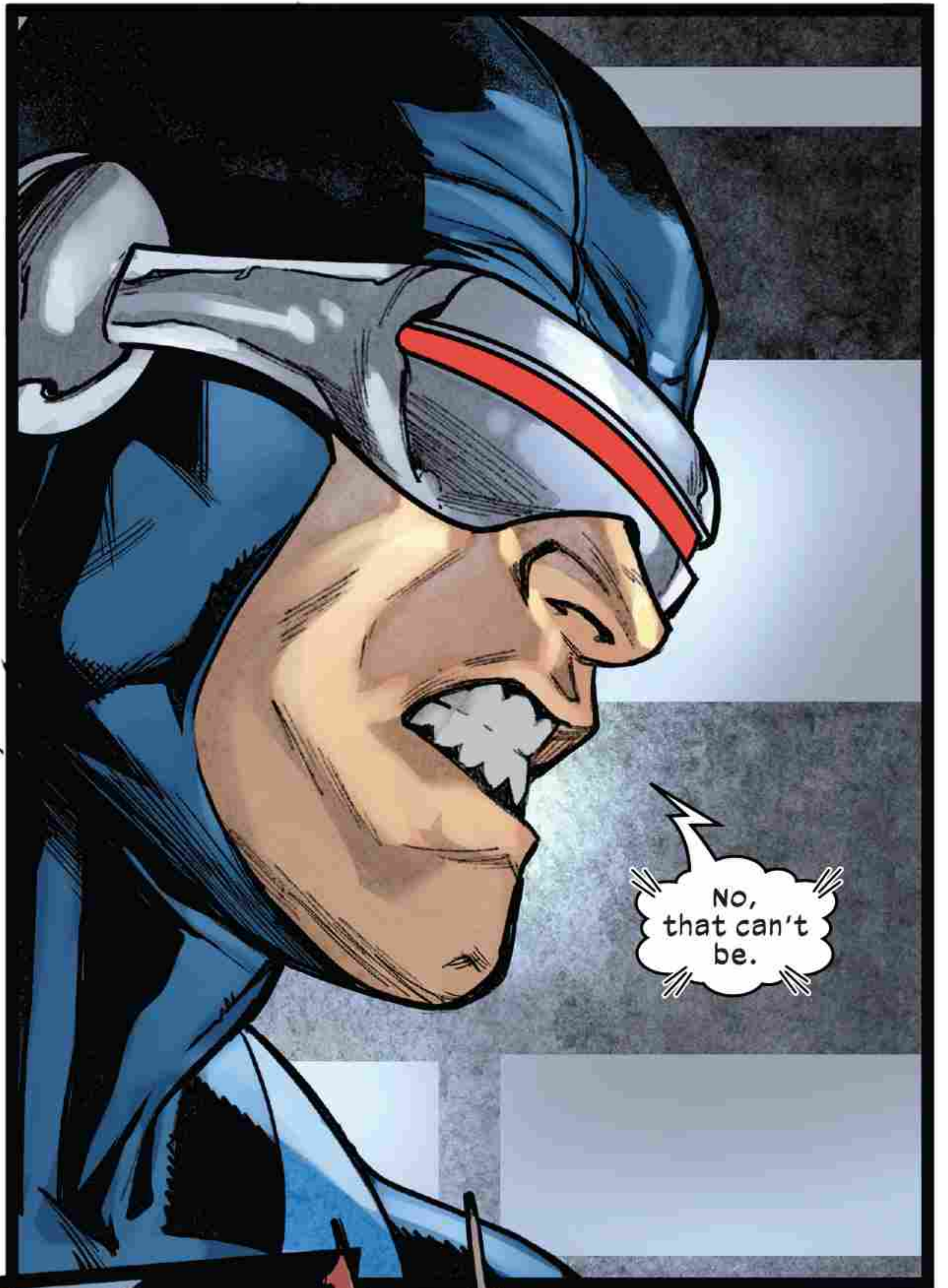
I'll use
telepathy
to get a
census--

Do it
fast!

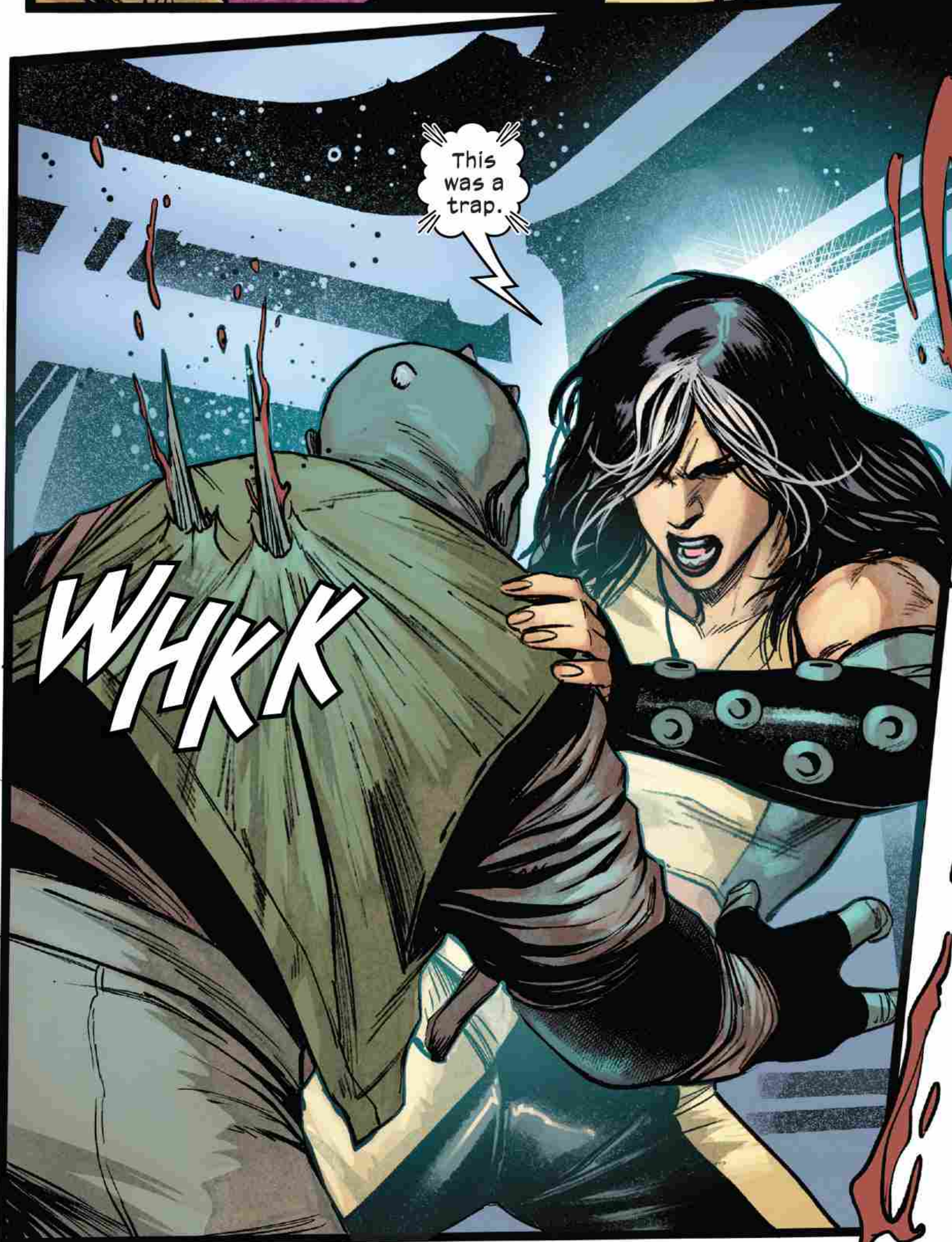
SNKT



The survivors-- they're *all* infected.



No, that can't be.



This was a trap.

WHKK



Corsair was the bait, and these poor souls... are payloads we were meant to deliver.

We don't have any time to operate on them. And from the sound and smell down here in the hold...it's already too late.



Cyclops, it's getting hectic back here!

Either you seal the bulkheads or I will!



The damn Brood will never be able to do this again.

I'll fly us into a star if I have to.



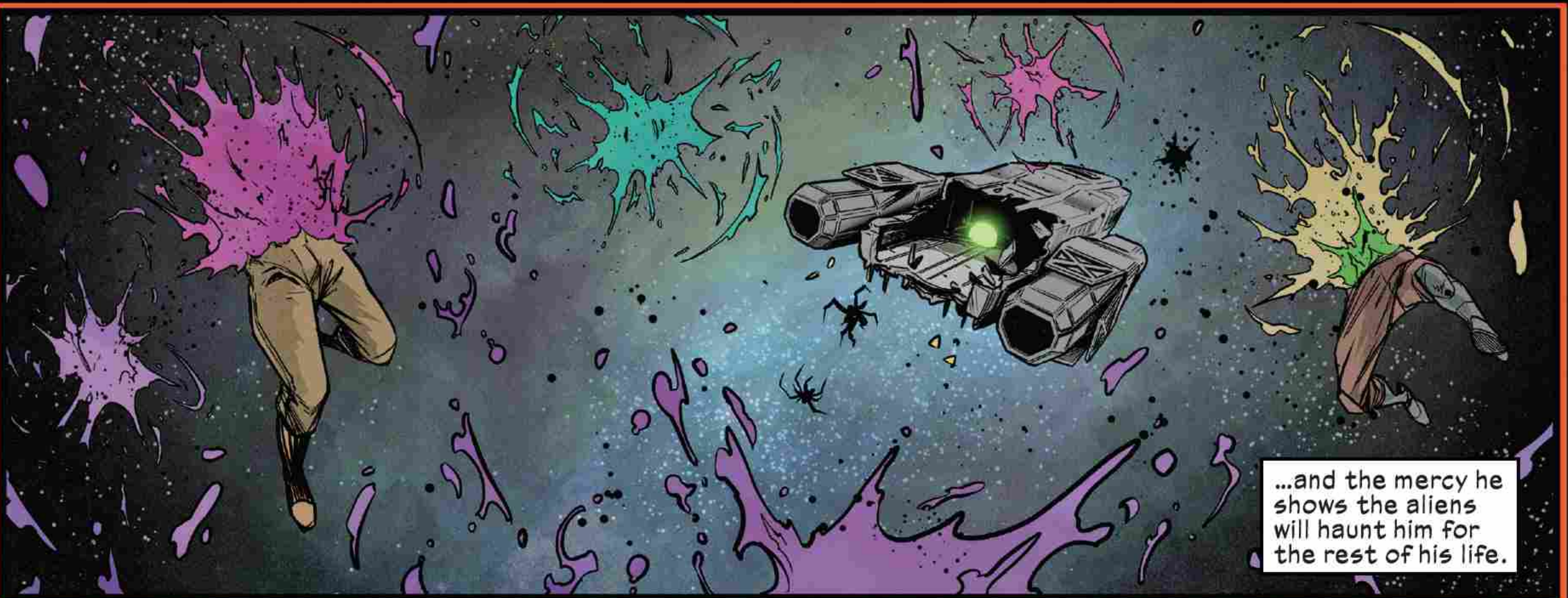
Scott. I got this.

I'm going to clear the ship.



Synch remembers standing beside Polaris, how she smelled of espresso and anxiety, and a moment later, her powers become his.

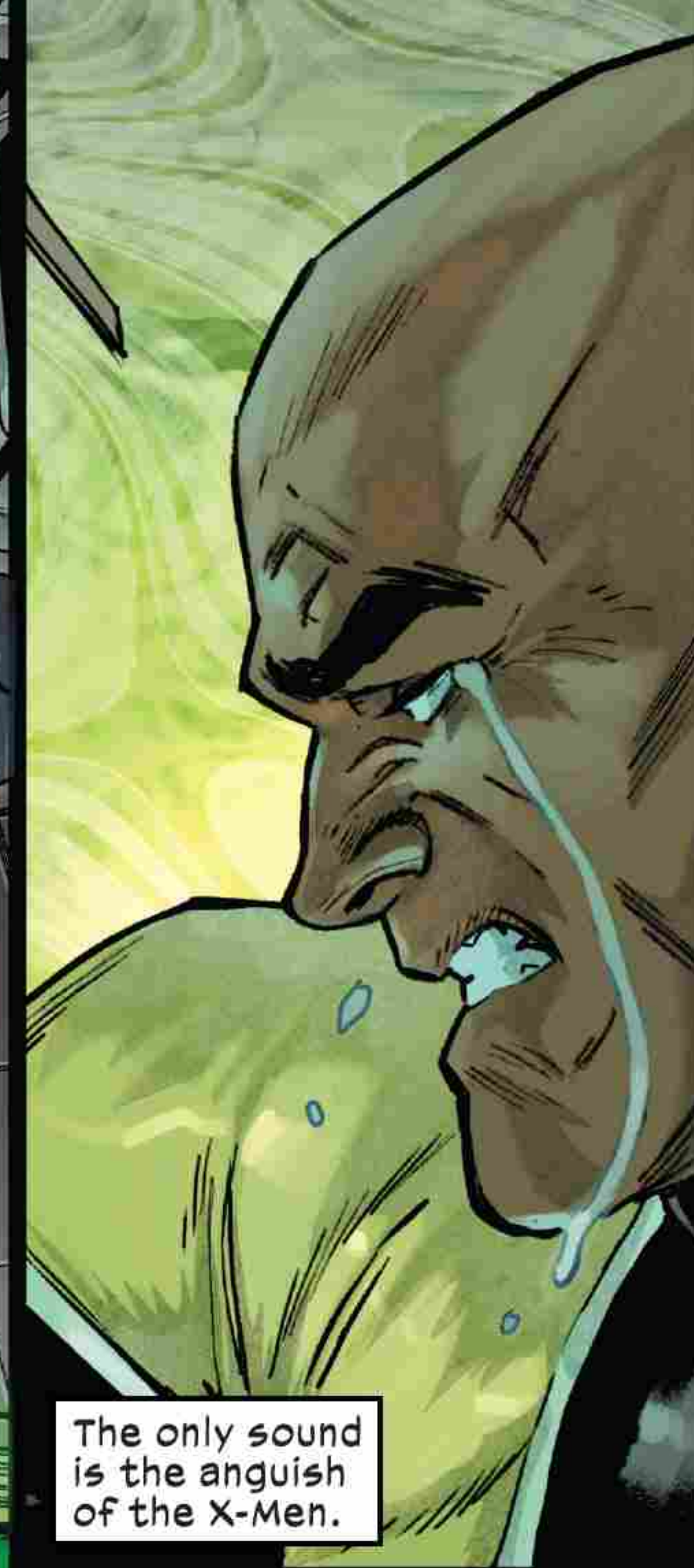
The bulkheads give way with a single thought from his mind...



...and the mercy he shows the aliens will haunt him for the rest of his life.



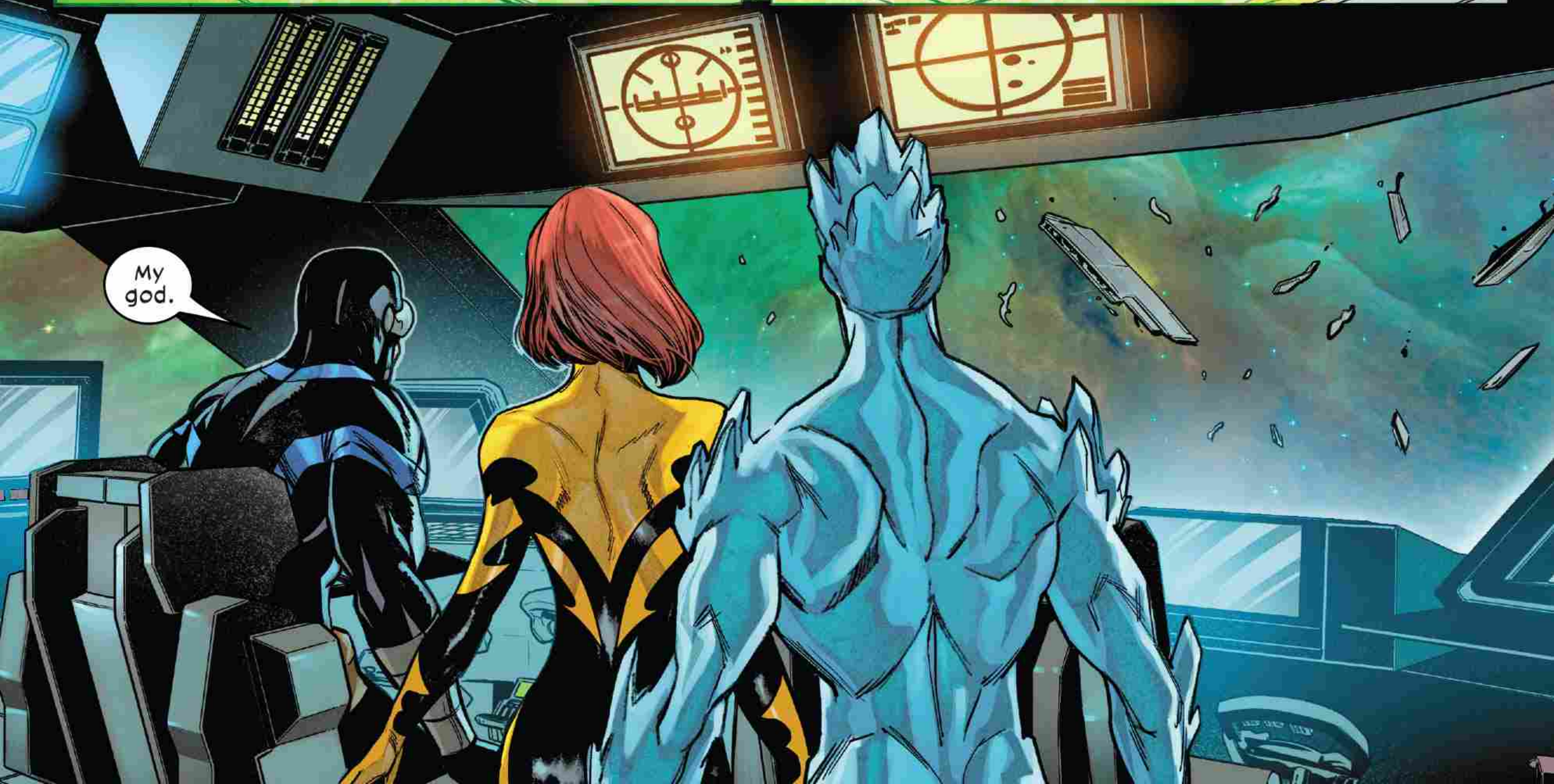
The void swallows
the dead and dying
in silence.



The only sound
is the anguish
of the X-Men.



There is a high
price for service.
Synch and Talon
have been paying
it for lifetimes.



My
god.



Synch didn't
kill those
folks...



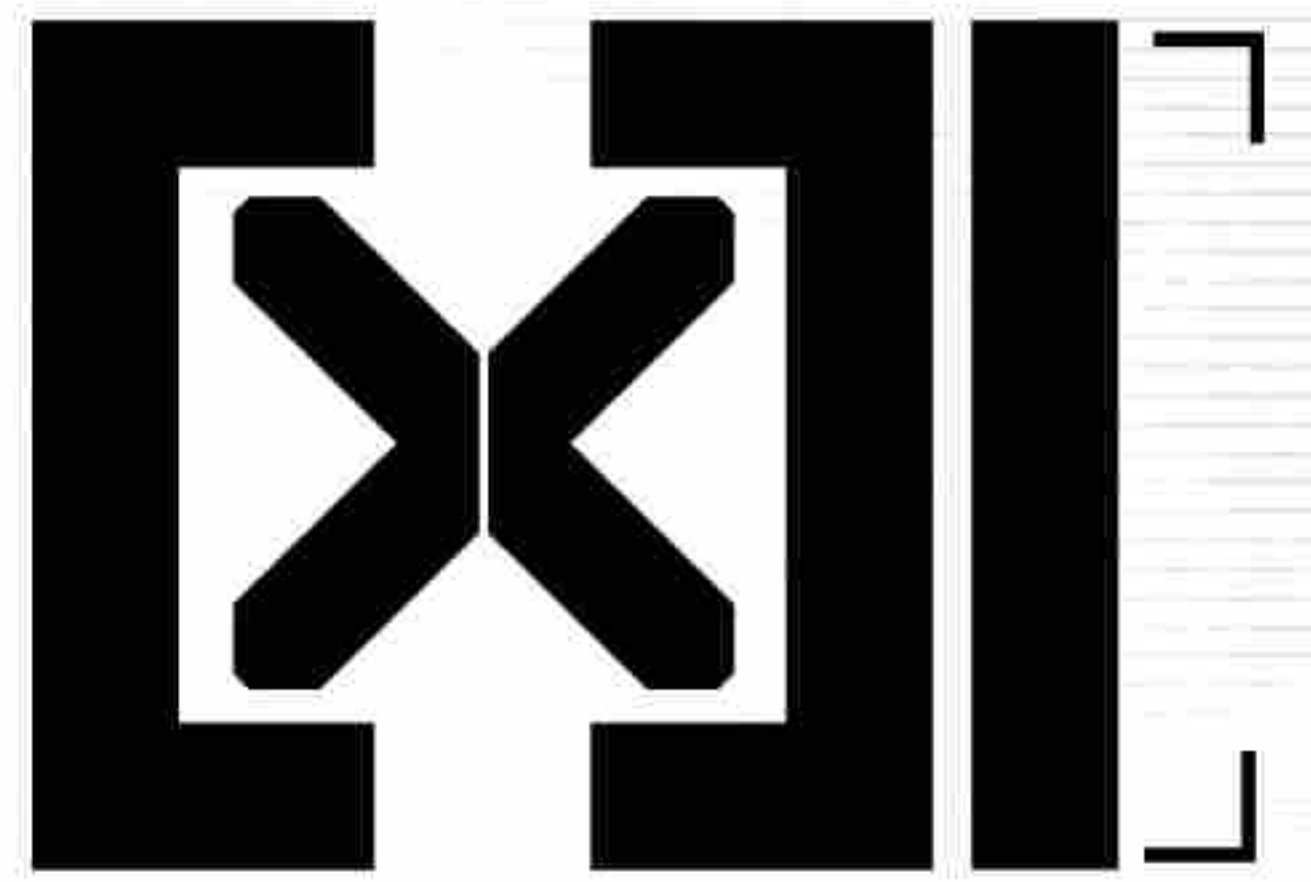
...but he
couldn't save
them either.



The Vault
mission
was hell...



...but at
least there
was nobody
else to fail.



WAR COUNCIL: THE BROOD

Present: Bishop, Cyclops, Magik & Psylocke

Cyclops: Obviously, we don't want to go picking fights, but --

Bishop: This one is easy. The Brood don't deserve to exist. It's not like we're discussing a culture. They're parasites. If Broo isn't able to maintain a grip on their hive mind, they'll become an existential threat to all life, and no offense to the little dude, but...Magneto he's not.

Magik: Maybe I'm being naive but...there's no Brood here on Earth, right?

Bishop: And I have a plan to keep it that way.

Psylocke: So we're proposing to go on the offense?

Cyclops: Let's hear the man out.

Bishop: I war-gamed a few scenarios, including specialized hybrids of several mutants who could be the tip of the spear in a campaign to end them.

Magik: Sounds very Sinister of you.

Bishop: But I ended up setting aside those notions for a more elegant solution. You see, Wanda and Pietro were both thought to be mutants. They're backed up in Cerebro. The cleanest course of action would be to have the Five grow us a Wanda, and instead of installing her mind from a backup, we have a telepath enter the vacant mind of our Scarlet Witch -- and then it's as simple as wishing...***"No more Brood."***

Cyclops: It's worth discussing --

Psylocke: I'm sorry. Did you write this, or did Beast? Or Dark Beast?

Magik: Yeah...if Broo loses his grip on those funky @&#\$, then you know where to find me, but I'm outie on any Scarlet Golem plans.

[The Krakoa War Council vote was deadlocked at 2-2.]



This is Monet broadcasting in the blind on X-Men emergency channels. Forge and I are back in our home universe and could use a ride.

I want to run some more tests on the gate we have aboard before we waltz through it again.



We'll probably have to wait a while before--

Or not. Hiya, Magik.

Uh-oh. What are you two doing together?

And all the way out by Jupiter?

And are we in a decapitated Celestial head?



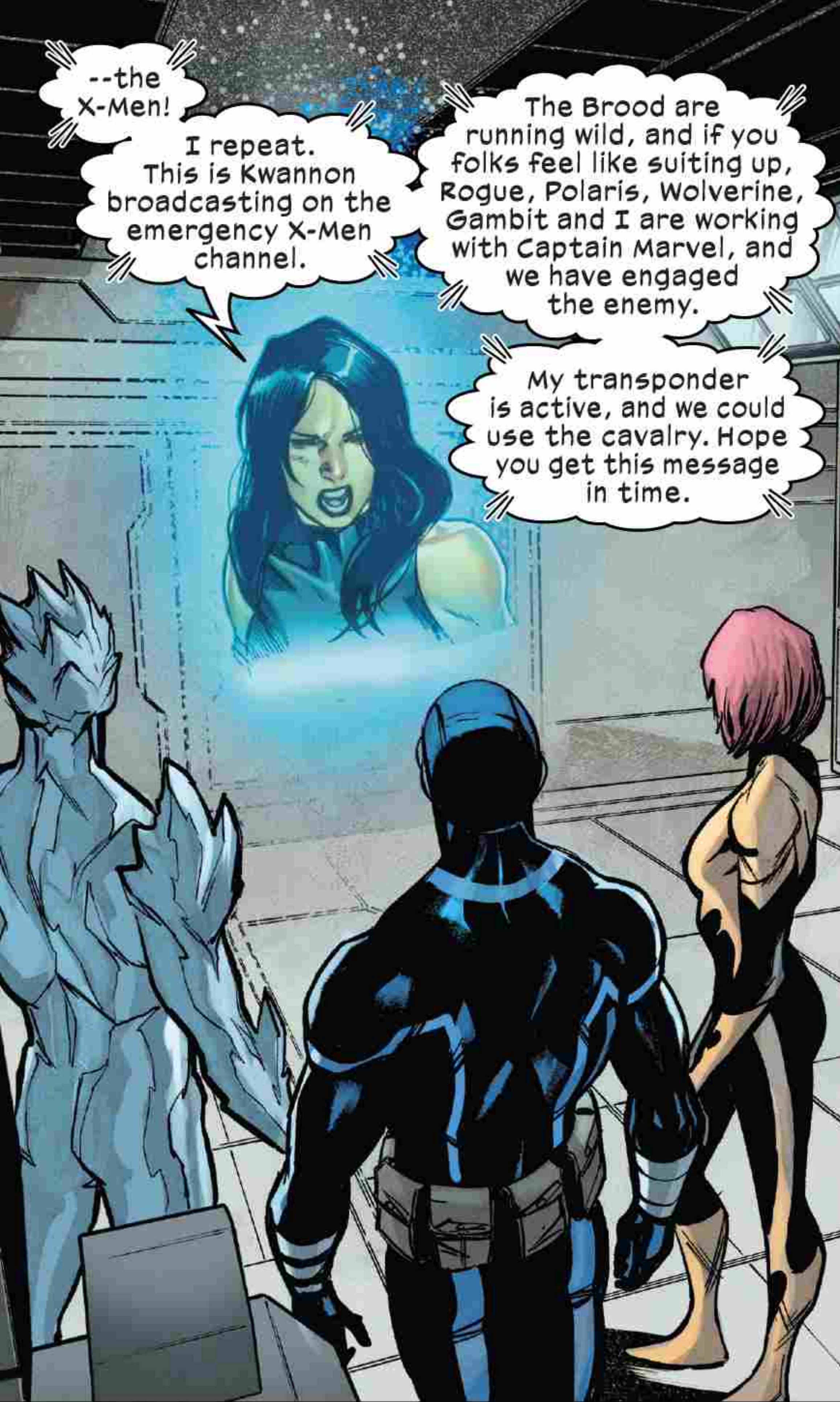
Space is weird.



Well, that was fun.

It was that. I don't know what Krakoa is going to do with this new real estate--but maybe that will be some more fun for us?

Tray tables up. Next stop--



--the X-Men!

I repeat. This is Kwannon broadcasting on the emergency X-Men channel.

The Brood are running wild, and if you folks feel like suiting up, Rogue, Polaris, Wolverine, Gambit and I are working with Captain Marvel, and we have engaged the enemy.

My transponder is active, and we could use the cavalry. Hope you get this message in time.



You heard Kwannon--she's asking for our help, and she'll have it.

Let's go kill the Brood once and for all.



NO, YOU CAN'T!



I don't think I'll let you tell me what I can do.

You told us you controlled the Brood and you *didn't*.

Those are just a *few* of the people who have paid the price.

My father's at death's door back in the sick bay.



But...he lives. Now, it's true Brood has lost control over some of his kind, but some can be saved, and--

Saved?! For what?

I know the value of mercy...but not for the Brood.



So...
it's genocide,
then?

Don't.



Do not
equate being hard
on the Brood with
genocide.

The Brood
represent an
existential threat
to all life!



And at
what point are
we complicit if Broo
loses control of his
pets again?



Then we'll
step in and do what
we always do.

And how
many more will be
dead then?

Refresh my
memory, how is it
you dealt with that
fungal parasite,
Cordyceps
Jones?

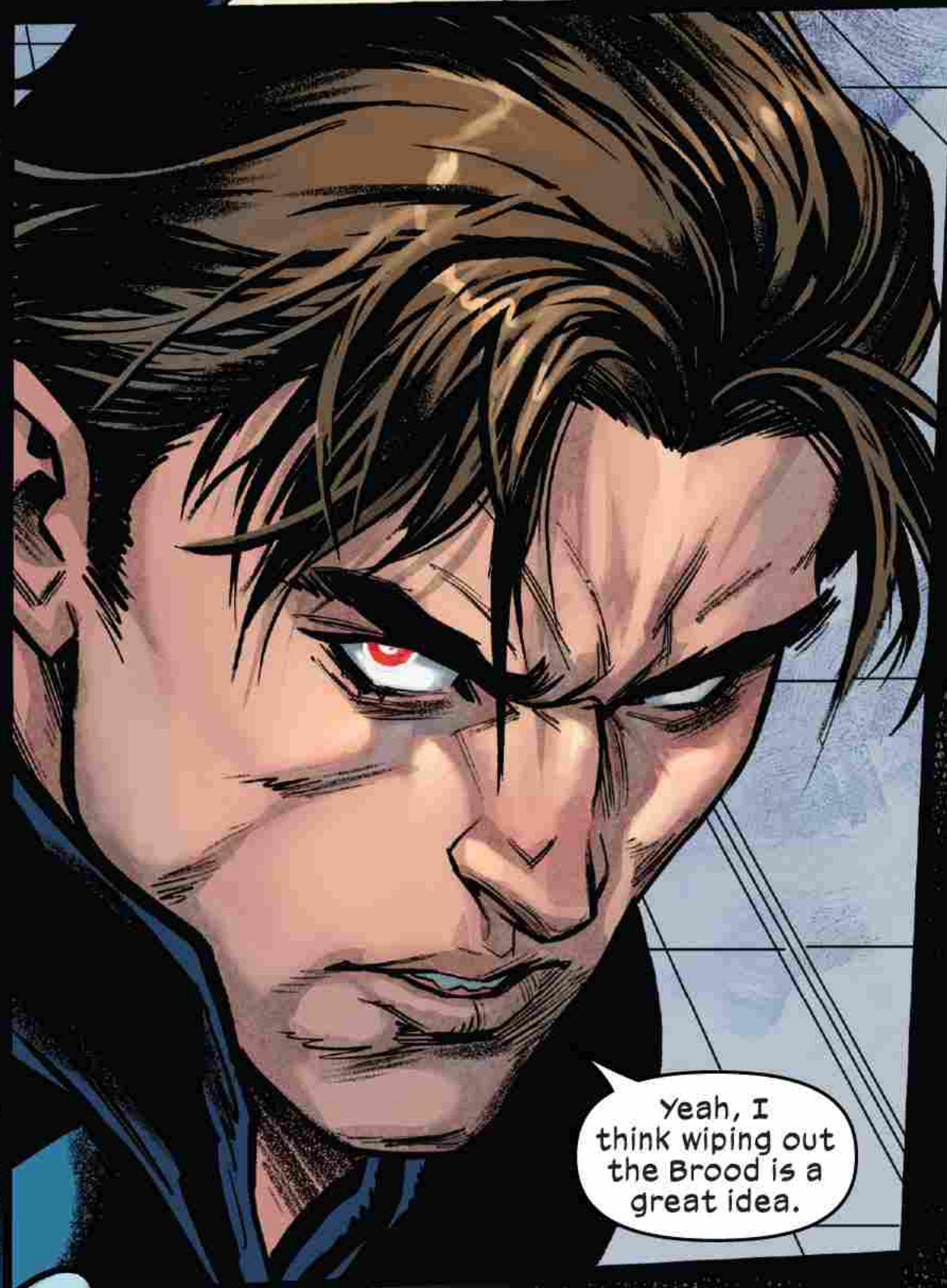


Look at me, Scott.

Wh-what are you doing?



I'm holding back your powers with mine. I want to see your face. Say what you're thinking, so we can all hear.



Yeah, I think wiping out the Brood is a great idea.



How very *human* of you.



Brood and I will gather the ones he can control and go.

Cyclops, it's not--

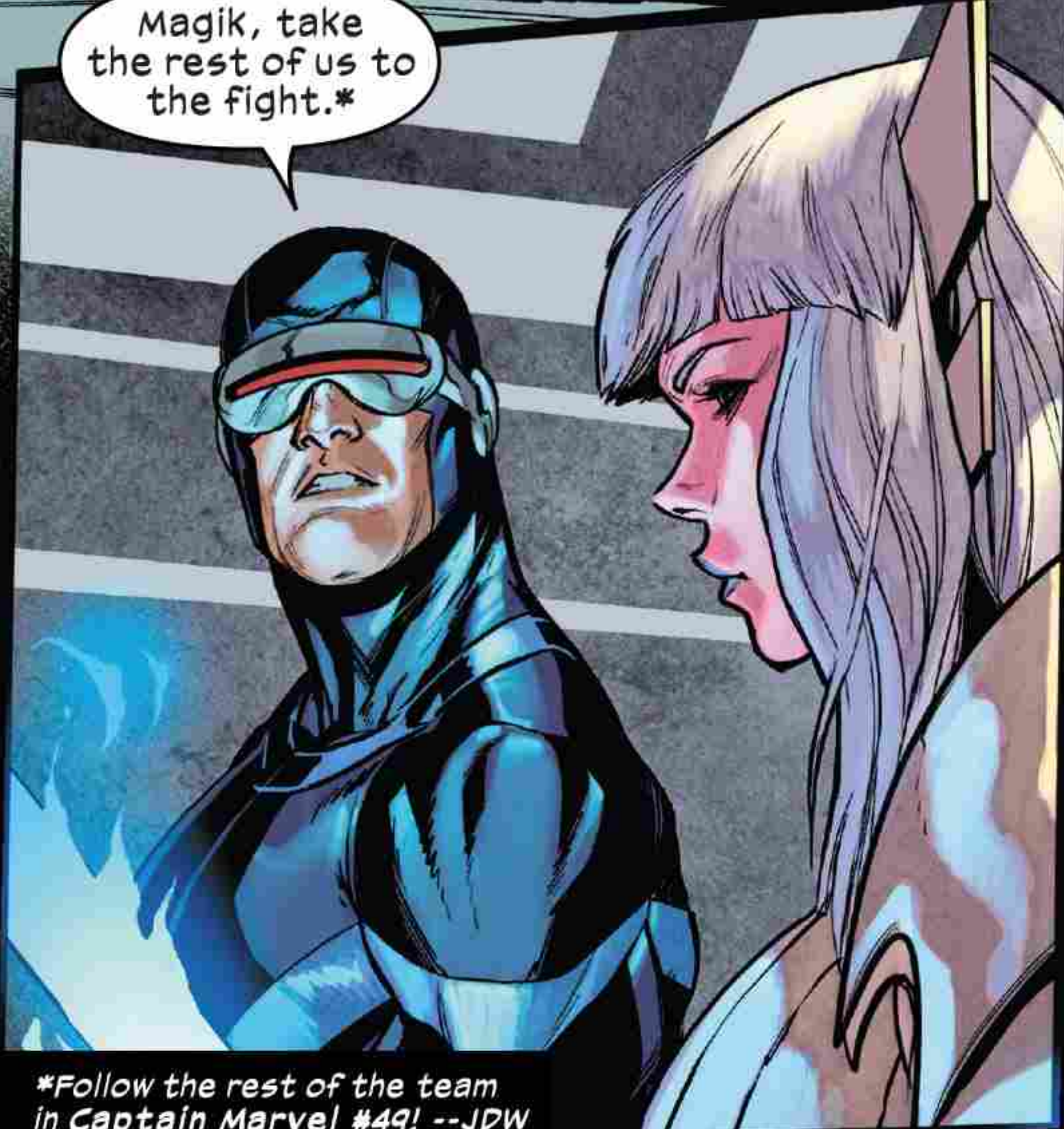
Not now, Brood.

Our friends are in trouble. We're going to fight alongside them...



...and don't try to stop me from killing the ones separated from your hive mind.

Monet, take Corsair to the Healing Gardens on Krakoa.



Magik, take the rest of us to the fight.*



Jean, for the ones that you can save...

...I just created a safe, empty bit of real estate in orbit around Jupiter.



Thank you, Forge.

Is--
is Cyclops
right?

Not
always. And not
today.

I fear
he might
be...

...but I
will die trying to prove
him wrong. We will have
redemption.

A noble
goal, Broo.

Now direct
the ones you can
control to a location
along our flight plan.
We'll save as many of
the ones that answer
your call as
we can.

But steel
yourself...



"...the ones that
are separated
from your hive
mind..."



"...will
fall."



"And you must
hide away with
your Brood..."

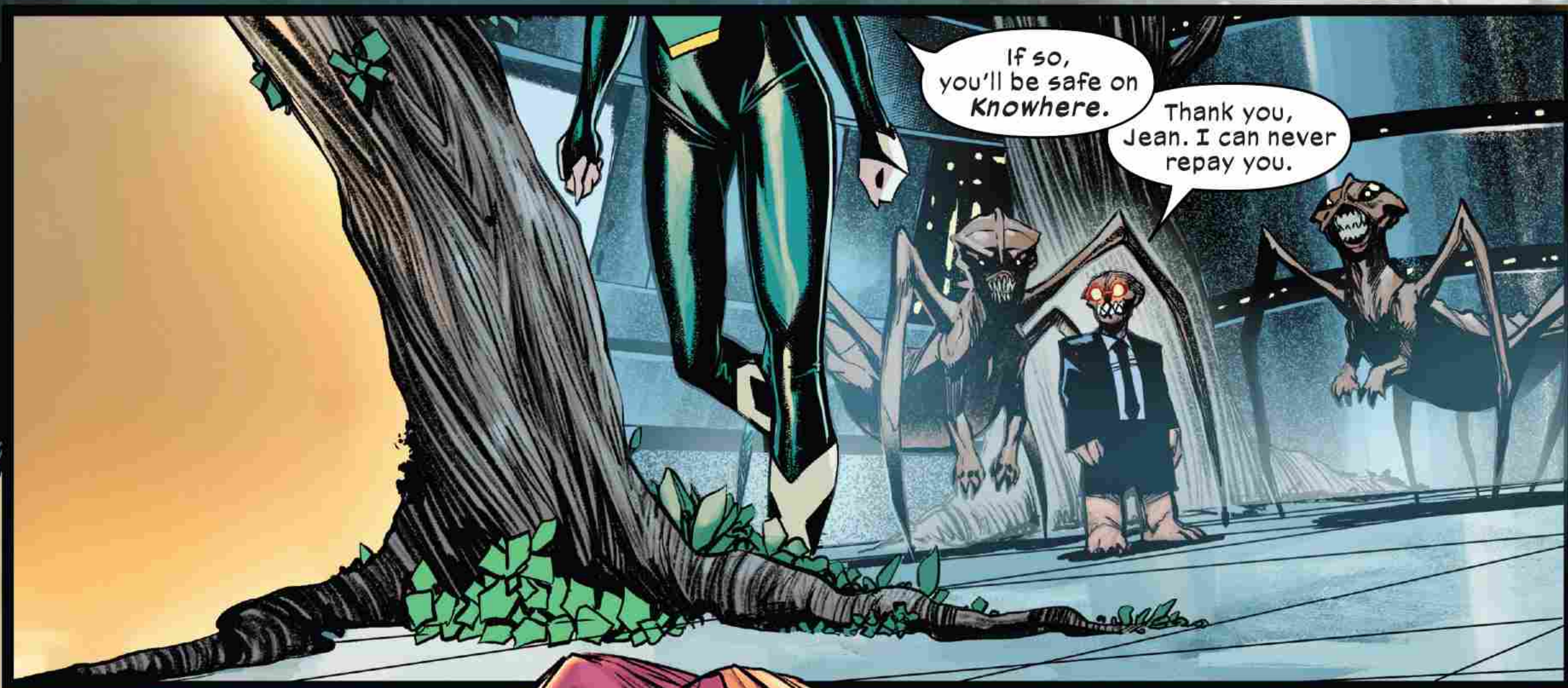
...and become xenophobic. How much do you love your kind?

Are you willing to shelter in place for the health and safety of everyone?



If so, you'll be safe on *Knowhere*.

Thank you, Jean. I can never repay you.



That may be true...but it doesn't mean you can't pay kindness forward.

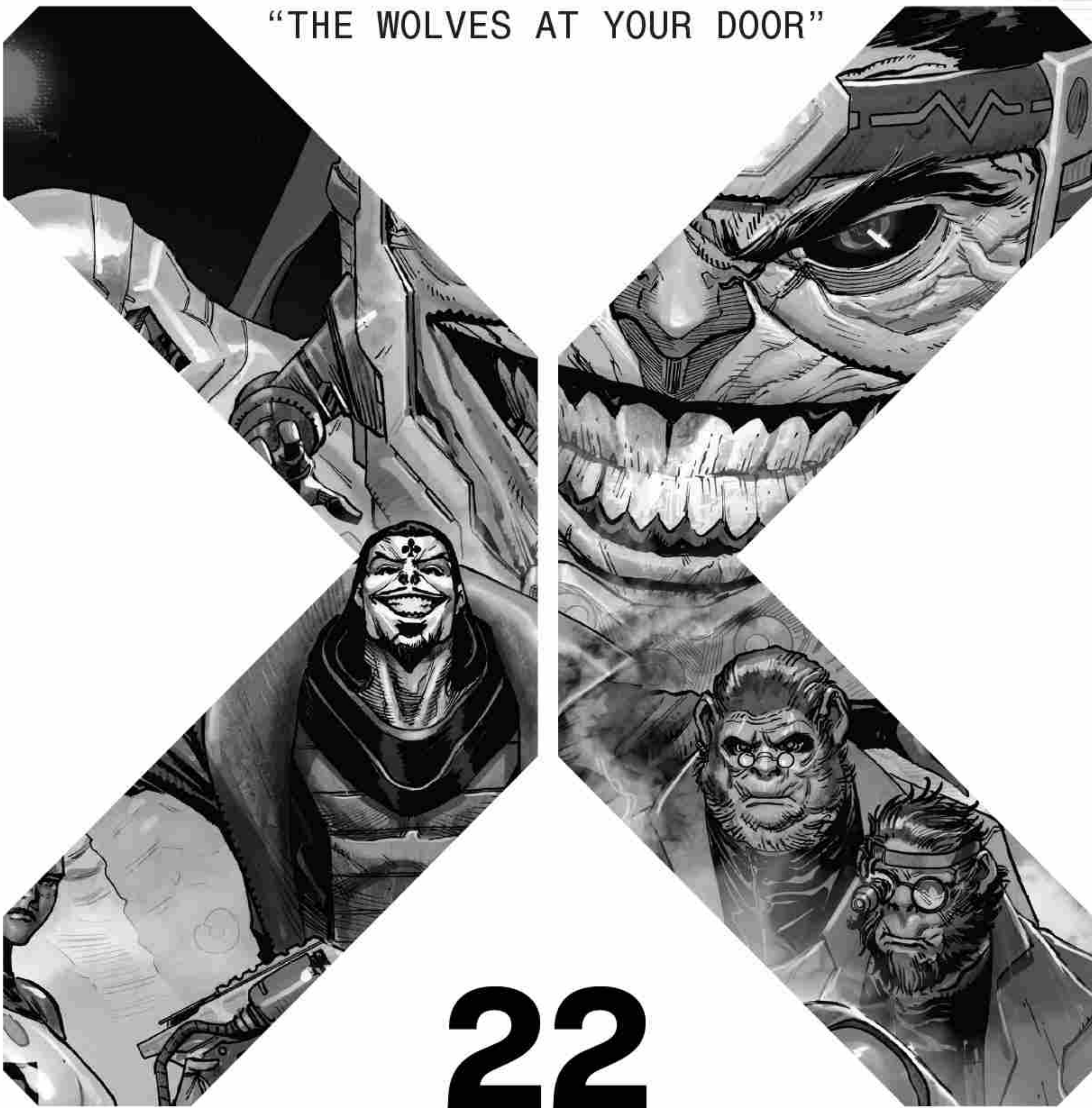
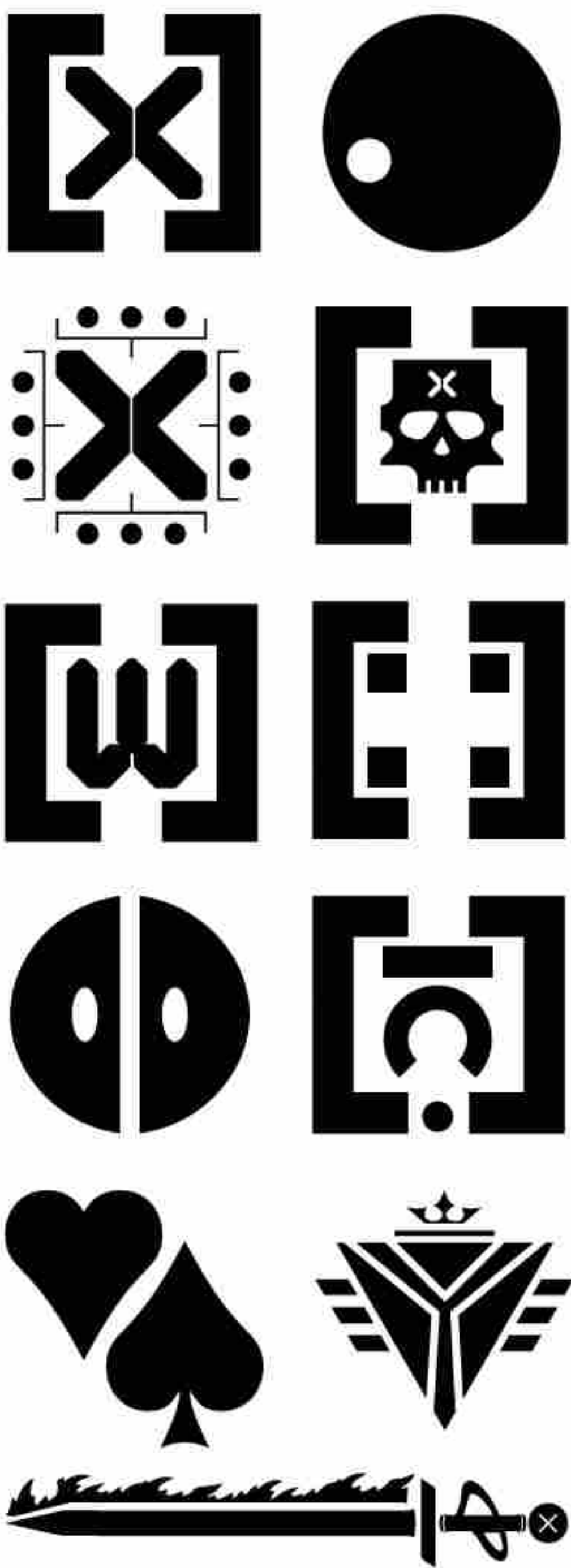
You spoke about redemption earlier. I...don't know what that means for the Brood. But I hope you will find a way to earn it.

It won't be easy, but if I can be at peace with what the Phoenix has done, then there's hope for you too.

And, Broo...get some sleep.



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NEXT



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ZONE